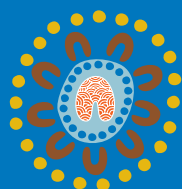




Curtin University



HEALTHY BLOOD HEALTHY BODY

EDUCULTURAL TOOLKIT

*Enhancing the cultural capability
of needle and syringe programs
for Indigenous Australian peoples
who inject drugs*

About CERIPH

The [Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact in Public Health](#) (CERIPH) is a multi-disciplinary research centre located within the Curtin School of Population Health. CERIPH is an innovative and active contributor to national and international public health and health promotion research.

CERIPH has a particular interest in community-based intervention research across the life course, especially in the areas of alcohol and other drugs, mental health, trauma, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, physical activity, injury prevention, homelessness, sustainability, and climate change. We work across settings including schools, universities, childcare centres, health services, prisons, green spaces, local government, workplaces, and online spaces.

Our populations include the workforce, teachers, students, parents, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants and mobile populations, people living with HIV, people who inject drugs, sex workers, older adults, and people of diverse sexuality and gender.

CERIPH seeks solutions that promote health, prevent disease, and protect populations from harm. We build individual and organisational capacity through our partnerships, applied research, education, and workforce training.

Recognising the complexity of health and its determinants, our multidisciplinary collaboration provides leadership and evidence to support action across educational, organisational, socio-economic, environmental, and political domains to improve population health in our region.



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This Educultural Toolkit was developed by the *Healthy Blood Healthy Body* project team at Curtin University and project collaborators.

The project aimed to increase access to needle and syringe programs (NSPs) for Indigenous Australian peoples who inject drugs, living in Boorloo (Perth), Western Australia.

Visit www.hb2project.org for further information about the *Healthy Blood Healthy Body* project and collaborators.

The *Healthy Blood Healthy Body* project was funded by a Healthway Intervention Research grant 2021-2025 and was informed by [exploratory research](#) completed in 2021, also funded by Healthway.



A Note on Terminology

This Toolkit acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have distinct cultures, languages, kinship systems, Lore, and customs. The term Indigenous Australian peoples is mainly used throughout the Toolkit when referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples collectively. In some instances, the term Aboriginal is used, consistent with the language of the resources referenced. Readers are encouraged to check with the local Aboriginal community you are working with for the appropriate terminology.

Content Warning

Indigenous Australian peoples should be aware that this Toolkit may contain records and online resources of images, voices or names of deceased persons in photographs, film, audio recordings, or print materials. The content in this Toolkit challenges individuals to identify and reflect on the colonial history, entrenched beliefs, and biases relating to racism and Indigenous Australian peoples. This process may be uncomfortable and overwhelming to some.

Acknowledgements

We recognise the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation as the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of the land which we live, learn, and work on today. We acknowledge that the Whadjuk people have a continuing spiritual and cultural connection to this land and pay respect to Elders past and present.

We also acknowledge the impact that injecting drug use can have on individuals, families, and communities. We recognise the need for a compassionate, evidence-informed approach that prioritises harm reduction, and access to support services and healthcare.

We also honour the resilience of those working in this space and the valuable lived experiences of people who inject drugs.

The Educultural Toolkit provides a critical resource for building cultural capability to enhance cultural awareness and safety, and ultimately cultural security for Indigenous Australian peoples accessing needle and syringe programs.

The Toolkit would not have been possible without the generous and valuable contributions of many individuals. We extend our sincere thanks to:

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Design by Tanya Bolt, [Mooya Creative](#).

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About the Educultural Toolkit

The Educultural Toolkit (hereafter ‘the Toolkit’) provides practical guidance to help needle and syringe program (NSP) staff navigate culturally sensitive interactions when providing harm reduction services to Indigenous Australian peoples, including during equipment distribution, health education sessions, and referral processes.

This Toolkit is designed to:

- Enhance understanding of alcohol and other drug use in an Indigenous context
- Increase awareness of resources and strategies to improve partnerships with local Indigenous services, organisations, and communities
- Provide information, resources, and tools to enhance cultural safety for people working with Indigenous Australian peoples in NSPs
- Provide tools to assess personal values and biases in relation to alcohol and other drug use.

The Educultural Toolkit aims to support workers in NSPs to:

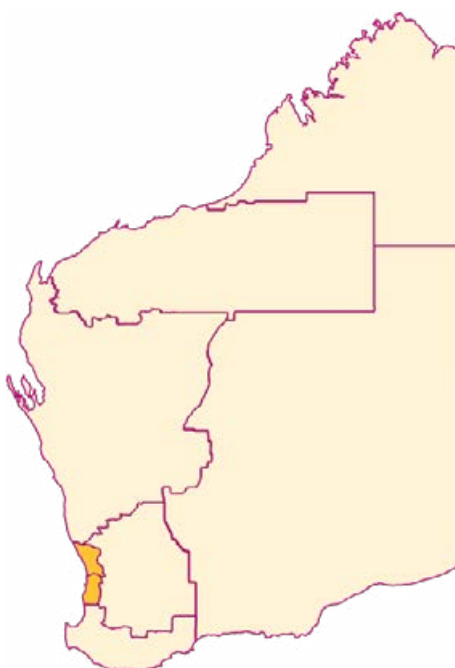
- Ensure services are appropriate to the needs of Indigenous Australian peoples
- Work effectively with local Indigenous Australian peoples and services
- Equip service providers with self-reflection tools.

We recognise that NSPs operate across diverse settings, and while this Toolkit provides important information and resources, some learnings may not directly apply to every environment. Please adapt the information as needed to suit the context of your work.

Who is this Toolkit for?

This Toolkit is intended for NSP service providers and NSP staff who work with Indigenous Australian peoples in Boorloo (Perth Metro region). See Figure 1. Its contents may also apply to, and have benefit for, services and contexts in other parts of Western Australia.

Figure 1: Boorloo (Perth Metro region) Highlighted on a Map of Western Australia



Source: WA Department of Education ^[1]

How to use the Educultural Toolkit

While everyone will be at a different stage of their journey towards cultural capability, this Toolkit is organised to establish a starting point and pathway to building further cultural capability. Learners are encouraged to proceed through the Toolkit sequentially. The Toolkit draws on existing evidence related to cultural capability working with Indigenous Australians. As an NSP worker, applying these cultural capability principles will help you create more accessible and appropriate harm reduction services that acknowledge the unique historical and cultural context of Indigenous Australian peoples who inject drugs.

The Toolkit is structured into three main modules:

1. Understanding of Indigenous Australians' History, Intergenerational Trauma, and Racism
2. Building Relationships and Partnerships: The Ongoing Journey to Developing Cultural Capability
3. Tools and Resources

Each module includes a combination of informational text, video links, activities, reflection questions, and suggested readings to maximise learning outcomes.

This Toolkit is not intended to, and cannot, replace the use of cultural awareness or cultural capability in-person workshops. For optimal learning and practice, learners are encouraged to complete additional relevant training beyond what is provided in this Toolkit.

Your feedback is important

The Educultural Toolkit is designed to enhance the cultural capability of NSP workers engaging with Indigenous Australian peoples. To assess its effectiveness, we have developed pre- and post-evaluation forms to gather participant feedback for continuous improvement. Please take a moment to complete this [short pre-evaluation form](#) (approximately 5-10 minutes).

Framework Underpinning the Educultural Toolkit

The **Educultural Toolkit** is underpinned by the **Cultural Capability Framework**, which emphasises the ongoing development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to engage effectively with diverse cultural groups. This framework highlights the importance of self-awareness, cultural respect, and inclusive practices in delivering equitable and culturally safe services.

Building cultural capability requires a structured and reflective approach, ensuring that individuals and organisations move beyond cultural awareness to actively embedding culturally responsive practices in their work. The **Building Cultural Capability Framework** provides a foundation for this growth by guiding NSP workers in developing meaningful engagement strategies, addressing biases, and fostering trust with Indigenous Australian communities. By integrating these frameworks, the Educultural Toolkit supports NSP workers in strengthening their ability to provide safe, respectful, and effective harm reduction services.

For NSP staff, developing cultural capability means understanding how historical factors influence Indigenous Australian peoples' trust in health services and their approach to accessing harm reduction resources. It involves creating environments where Indigenous Australian peoples feel respected and safe when seeking injecting equipment and related support.

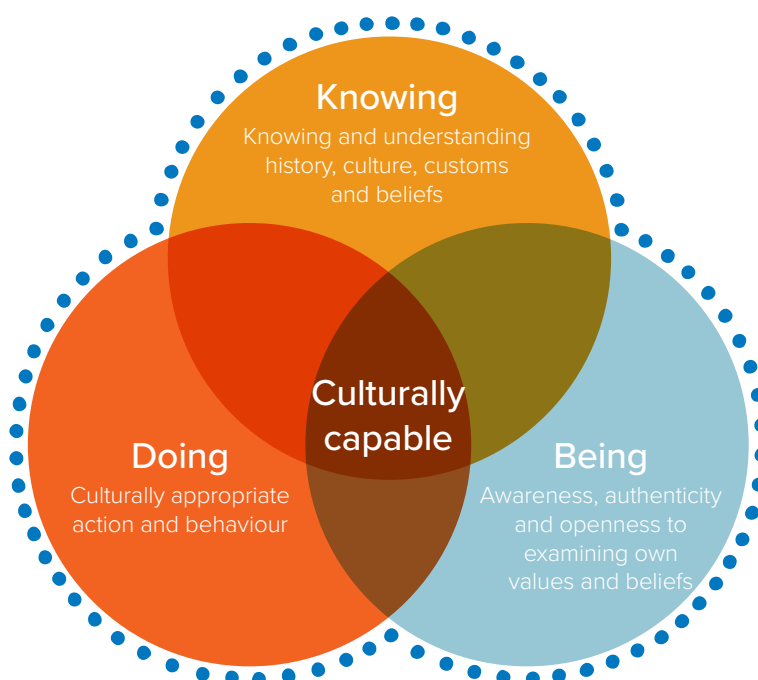
The Cultural Capability Framework

Knowing, Doing, and Being

The [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework](#)^[2] from the Australian Public Service Commission outlines strategies for fostering cultural competence. It emphasises understanding historical and cultural contexts, engaging with Indigenous Australian communities respectfully, and embedding cultural awareness in organisational policies.

The framework (Figure 2) includes guiding principles to promote better service delivery and relationships with Indigenous Australian peoples through continuous learning, culturally appropriate communication, and addressing unconscious bias.

Figure 2: The Knowing, Doing, and Being Framework



Source: Australian Public Service Commission^[2]

This framework emphasises the importance of continuous learning and development across three domains:

Knowing - Knowing and understanding history, culture, customs, beliefs, and local circumstances.

Doing - Culturally appropriate action and behaviour.

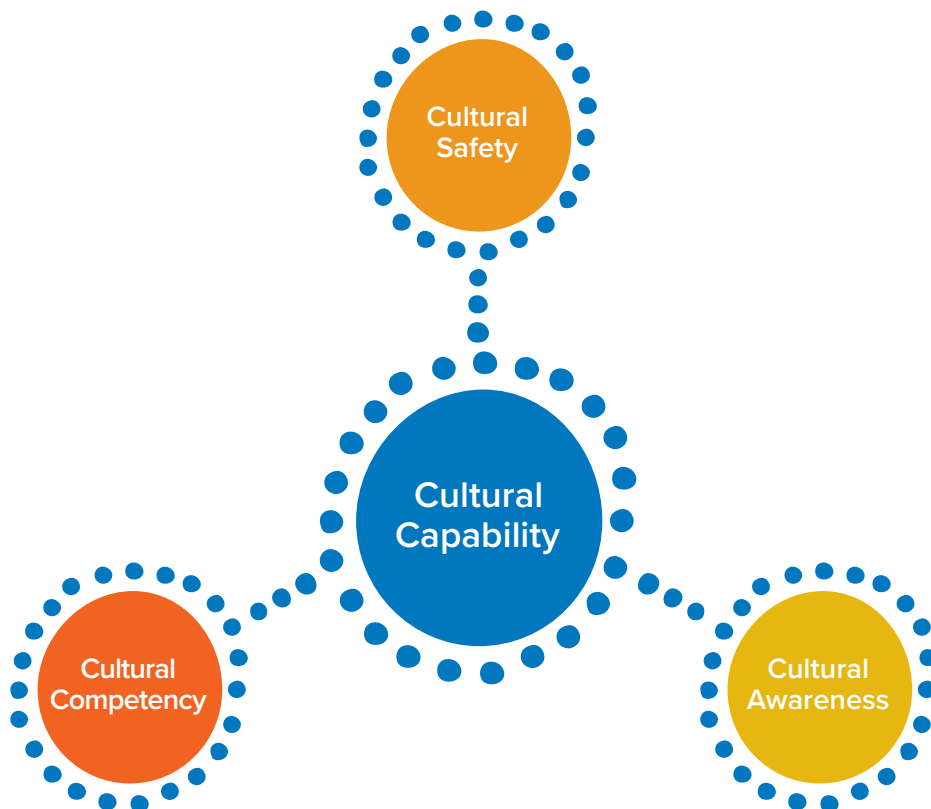
Being - Awareness, authenticity and openness to examining own values, beliefs and biases, and their impact on others. Having integrity and cultural sensitivity in decision-making.

This holistic approach to growth highlights that cultural capability is achieved through ongoing learning in all three domains of effective practice, 'knowing, doing, and being'.

Building Cultural Capability

Cultural capability is a broad term that encompasses cultural awareness, cultural safety, and cultural competency ^[3]. See Figure 3 below from the Victorian Public Sector Commission.

Figure 3: *Cultural Capability Encompasses Cultural Safety, Cultural Awareness, and Cultural Competency*



Source: Victorian Public Sector Commission ^[3]

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness means showing an understanding and being mindful of the similarities and differences across cultures. This requires respect for and acknowledgement of different cultural practices, languages, expressions, dress manner, food, religions, and communication styles when engaging with people of different cultural backgrounds ^[4].

These cultural practices will vary across different Indigenous communities.

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety goes beyond being aware and respecting different cultures. It involves creating a safe space and respectful environment for individuals to reflect on their own cultural identities and attitudes while being open to others' cultural identities and attitudes ^[3].

Cultural safety requires service-providers to self-reflect and examine themselves and the potential impact of their culture on interactions with their clients. This requires questioning their own biases, prejudices, assumptions, attitudes, and stereotypes ^[3].

Within NSP settings, cultural safety involves examining how service delivery methods, physical spaces, and staff interactions might impact Indigenous Australian peoples' willingness or ability to access sterile injecting equipment. This includes considering how intake procedures, confidentiality practices, and educational materials reflect cultural sensitivity.

Activities that can contribute to a welcoming and culturally safe environment within an NSP setting include:

- Participating in community events and celebrations that honour Indigenous Australian peoples and culture
- Provide food and beverages if appropriate
- Display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, and Indigenous art in workplaces
- Use Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artwork throughout promotional materials targeted to the local Indigenous community
- Have an Acknowledgement of Country plaque at workplace
- Provide an Acknowledgement of Country in meetings ^[3].

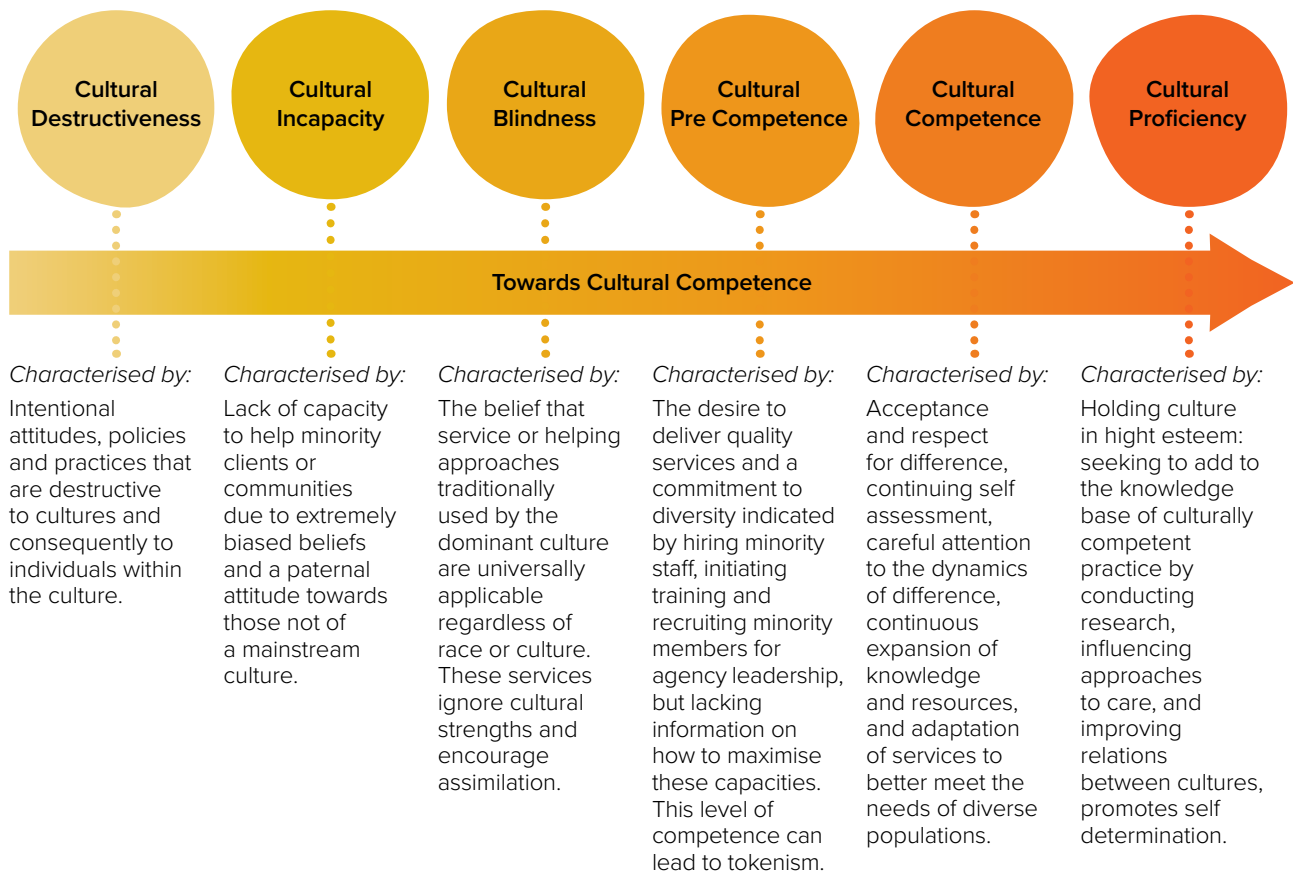
Cultural Competency

Cultural competency, also known as cultural responsiveness, is an ongoing and transformative journey. On an individual level, cultural competency is expressed through behaviours and attitudes ^[5]. It includes self-awareness, knowledge of different cultural practices, and the ability to apply this understanding in various contexts to create inclusive and respectful environments.

Cultural competence is not something you can achieve through practicing or mastering a skill set, it requires a commitment to ongoing learning and self-reflection ^[5]. The cultural competence continuum (Figure 4) identifies six levels of cultural competence. For NSP workers, progressing along the cultural competence continuum involves continuously improving your ability to provide harm reduction services that respect Indigenous Australian ways of knowing and healing, while acknowledging the impact of trauma on health practices, including injecting drug use.

Figure 4: Cultural Competence Continuum

CULTURAL COMPETENCE CONTINUUM



Source: Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) ^[5]

Watch Video: Cultural Competency Continuum (3:02 mins)

Source: Bill Deans ^[1]



Reflection

Reflect on examples from your own life, or in Australia's history, current government policies or practices, that illustrate each level of cultural competency represented on the continuum.

Consider where you are personally situated on the cultural competence continuum. As a worker in a NSP setting, what actions can you take to further develop your cultural competency?

ⁱ Adapted from: Cross, T. (2007, September). *Through Indigenous eyes: Rethinking theory and practice* [Paper presentation]. SNAICC Conference, Adelaide, South Australia.

Cultural Humility

Culture does not remain stagnant, rather it evolves and adapts as a dynamic system of beliefs and values shaped by an individual's interactions, that is, interactions with one-another, technology, institutions, and socio-economic determinants of our lives ^[7].

Given how cultures are constantly changing, it is not possible to ever be fully culturally competent. Cultural humility requires us to accept this and be willing to learn through self-reflexivity and others' experiences to progress towards building meaningful and respectful relationships ^[7].

“Cultural humility requires one to admit that one does not know and is willing to learn from the other person's experiences, while being aware of one's own embeddedness in culture” (p.2) ^[7].

Connection to Country

While non-Indigenous people may consider land as a commodity that can be sold or bought, Country is much more than land to Indigenous Australian peoples. The connection between Aboriginal law and spirituality is deeply rooted in Country and the wellbeing of land is central to Aboriginal culture ^[8].

Indigenous Australian peoples' connection to Country holds immense significance for Aboriginal peoples' cultural identity and sense of belonging ^[9]. Indigenous Australian peoples survive despite the ongoing impacts of colonisation. These communities thrive through sharing strength through Country and culture ^[10].

Ambelin Kwaymullina ^[11], a Palyku woman whose Country is in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, explains:

For Aboriginal peoples, Country is much more than a place. Rock, tree, river, hill, animal, human – all were formed of the same substance by the Ancestors who continue to live in land, water, sky. Country is filled with relations speaking language and following Law, no matter whether the shape of that relation is human, rock, crow, wattle. Country is loved, needed, and cared for, and country loves, needs, and cares for her peoples in turn. Country is family, culture, identity. Country is self (p.1).

Understanding the significance of Country helps those working in NSP settings recognise how displacement and disconnection can contribute to injecting drug use issues for some Indigenous Australian peoples, and how reconnection to Country can be an important part of holistic healing approaches alongside harm reduction services.

Watch Video: *Bob Randall: The Land Owns Us* (6:14 mins)

Source: *Global Oneness Project* ^[12]



Stolen Generations survivor, Bob Randall, a Yankunytjatjara Elder and Traditional Owner of Uluru (Ayers Rock), explains: “...the Granny Law has given me my responsibility, now that I'm grown up, to care for my Country. Care for my mother. Care for everything that is around me... we call it Kanyini – caring with unconditional love, with the responsibility.” (3:44)

Module 1: Understanding of Indigenous Australian History, Intergenerational Trauma, and Racism

A deep understanding of Indigenous Australian history, **intergenerational trauma**, and **racism** is essential for delivering culturally appropriate services. The historical experiences of Indigenous peoples, including colonisation, dispossession, and discriminatory policies, have had lasting impacts across generations.

Intergenerational trauma continues to affect health, wellbeing, and access to services, while systemic racism remains a barrier to equitable care. Recognising these factors is crucial for NSP workers to foster trust, provide respectful support, and contribute to culturally safe harm reduction practices.

The objectives of module 1 are to:

- Understand the effects of history, racism, and intergenerational trauma on Indigenous Australian communities.
- Understand the complexities and contexts related to alcohol and other drug use in Indigenous Australian communities.

Colonisation and Ongoing Impacts for Indigenous Australian Peoples

The historical timeline of events impacting Indigenous Australian peoples since colonisation is extensive and multifaceted. While not exhaustive, Figure 5 depicts several key events that have significantly shaped the experiences and rights of Indigenous Australian peoples.

Figure 5: Historical Timeline

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN PEOPLES HISTORICAL TIMELINE

60,000+ YEARS

Indigenous Australian peoples have lived in Australia for at least 60,000 years (Torres Strait Islanders at least 2,500 years). It is only in the past 500 years there has been European contact with Indigenous Australian peoples.

1905

Legal Guardian

The WA Protector of Aborigines became the guardian of all Indigenous Australian and 'half caste' children under the age of 16.

1967

Self-determination

The Federal Labor Government adopted the policy of 'self-determination' for Indigenous Australian communities, described as 'Aboriginal communities deciding the pace and nature of their future development as significant components within a diverse Australia.'

2008

Sorry...

Prime Minister Kevn Rudd, apologises to the Stolen Generations, their families and communities for the lasting harm caused by past government policies and practices.

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Reconciliation and Ongoing Efforts

Continuous advocacy for justice and recognition, while celebrating the ongoing resilience and vibrant contributions of Indigenous Australian peoples.

1788

Terra Nullius

From 1788, Australia was treated by the British as a colony of settlement, not of conquest. Indigenous Australian peoples' land was taken over by British colonists on the premise that the land belonged to no-one (*terra nullius*).

1962

Right to Vote

The Australian government granted Indigenous Australian peoples the right to vote in federal elections, making a significant step towards political recognition and equality.

1992

Mabo Case

The High Court of Australia ruled in the Mabo case that the concept of 'Terra nullius' was a legal fiction and that Indigenous Australian peoples had rights to their land. This decision led to the recognition of Native Title.

2023

Voice to Parliament Referendum

The referendum aimed to establish an Indigenous Australian voice in the constitution. This body would have allowed Indigenous Australian peoples to make representations to parliament, however, the proposal was rejected nationally and did not achieve the double majority needed for constitutional change.

Australian History and its Impact on the Lives of Indigenous Australian Peoples Today

Indigenous Australian societies are diverse and consist of complex kinship systems and a deep connection to Country, expressed through various languages, customs, and traditions. Indigenous Australians have sustained the oldest living culture in the world reflecting profound knowledge of their ecosystems and strong self-determination. Prior to colonisation, Indigenous Australians lived and practiced their culture freely.

As a result of colonisation, Indigenous Australian peoples face issues such as:

- Disconnection from Country and culture
- Marginalisation within society
- Intergenerational trauma and racism.

From mid-1800s to the 1970s, thousands of Indigenous Australian children were forcefully removed from their parents by government, churches and welfare bodies and placed in institutions, adopted, or fostered by non-Indigenous people. This dark period in Australia's history, known as the **Stolen Generations**, saw **between one in three and one in 10 Indigenous Australian children** forcibly removed from their families across Australia ^[13].

Children who were systematically removed from their families were not allowed to practice their culture and speak their language. The disconnection from family, culture and community between the Stolen Generations and the children, grandchildren and future generations has created a cycle of intergenerational trauma, and the impacts of this are still being felt by those affected by this disconnection. [The Healing Foundation](#) ^[14] reports that in Western Australia, almost half of the Indigenous Australian population have links to the Stolen Generations.

The negative health impact of past laws and practices have resulted in a range of mental health problems associated with the trauma, including grief and severe depression and self-damaging behaviour, including self-mutilation, alcohol and substance abuse [including injecting drug use] and suicide (p.169) ^[13].

Colonisation and its effects including intergenerational trauma, racism, dispossession, and discrimination continue to have a lasting consequence on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australian peoples. Past policies have led to a deep-seated mistrust in government services and institutions and a significant increase in the risk and harms of alcohol and other drug use ^[15]. Addressing this challenge requires a commitment to building trust, relationships, truth-telling, and culturally capable support services and systems that empower Indigenous Australian communities to heal.

Activity

The history of Indigenous Australian peoples is complex and deeply interwoven with the effects of colonisation, cultural disruption, and ongoing resilience. It is essential to engage with and understand this history to build stronger, more respectful relationships with Indigenous Australian peoples and communities. Consider how understanding the history of colonisation will affect your approach to engaging with Indigenous Australian peoples accessing NSP services.

This section has provided a brief introduction. To learn more, explore the resources available on the following websites:

- [The Healing Foundation](#) (see [Timeline of trauma and healing in Australia](#))
- [Creative Spirits](#) (see [A searchable Aboriginal history timeline](#))

Complexities and Contexts Relevant to Alcohol and Other Drug Use in Indigenous Australian Communities

Strength and Resilience

The strength and resilience of Indigenous Australian peoples and their communities in the face of adversity is evident in their rich culture nurtured through strong connections to cultural practices, kinship, Country, traditions and community, and promoting emotional and spiritual wellbeing ^[16].

Indigenous Australian peoples have not just survived but have thrived through maintaining these connections while also adapting in response to ongoing colonial oppression. This strength lies in their capacity to heal, resist systemic challenges, and actively seek self-determination ^[16]. The ability to adapt, survive, and thrive in the face of historical and ongoing challenges reinforces the strength that Indigenous peoples carry across generations.

Intergenerational Trauma

For over 60,000 years, Indigenous Australian peoples have inhabited Australia and over time, developed complex and sophisticated societies, knowledge, and a rich and strong connection to culture and land ^[17]. However, the consequences of Australia's colonial past, dispossession of Indigenous Australian peoples' lands, and ongoing oppressive practices and racism have resulted in historical trauma.

This experience of unresolved historical trauma is a significant risk factor impacting Indigenous Australians' social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) ^[18]. Research demonstrates that health and wellbeing are interrelated, and trauma has a significant impact on both the psychological and physical wellbeing of the individual.

The SEWB model (Figure 6) recognises the interconnectedness of the many aspects of our lives that come together to impact our overall wellbeing, these aspects include body, mind, family and kinship, community, culture, Country, and spirituality ^[18].

Figure 6: Social and Emotional Wellbeing Model



SEWB Diagram adapted from Gee et al. (2014)

Source: Transforming Indigenous Mental Health and Wellbeing ^[19]

The reoccurrence of trauma and the cumulative effect of trauma-on-trauma can emerge along with additional risk factors such as:

- Incarceration
- Family violence
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Self-harm ^[20].

This trauma can then be passed on between generations of families through prolonged exposure to stressors, resulting in an unaddressed cycle of trauma. The successive transmission of trauma from one generation to the next is known as **intergenerational trauma**.

Tujague et al. ^[21] (p.4) states that “*understanding trauma can move us past racist assumptions and help us change our systems and policies.*” Therefore, **culturally safe, trauma-informed practice** that acknowledges the historical context and the subsequent ongoing oppressive practices is necessary to promote healing and resilience within Indigenous Australian communities.

When providing NSP services to Indigenous Australian peoples, recognising these historical contexts helps move beyond simplistic views of injecting drug use to understand the complex interplay between trauma, disconnection, and health behaviours. This understanding enables NSP staff to provide more compassionate, non-judgemental harm reduction services.

Please see suggested readings for further information on trauma-informed practices at the end of this module.

Watch Video: *Intergenerational Trauma Animation (4:02 mins)*

Source: *The Healing Foundation* ^[22]



Reflection

Consider how trauma can manifest in the lives of Indigenous Australian peoples accessing NSP services. What areas can you focus on to enhance your ability to provide culturally safe, trauma-informed care?

Racism

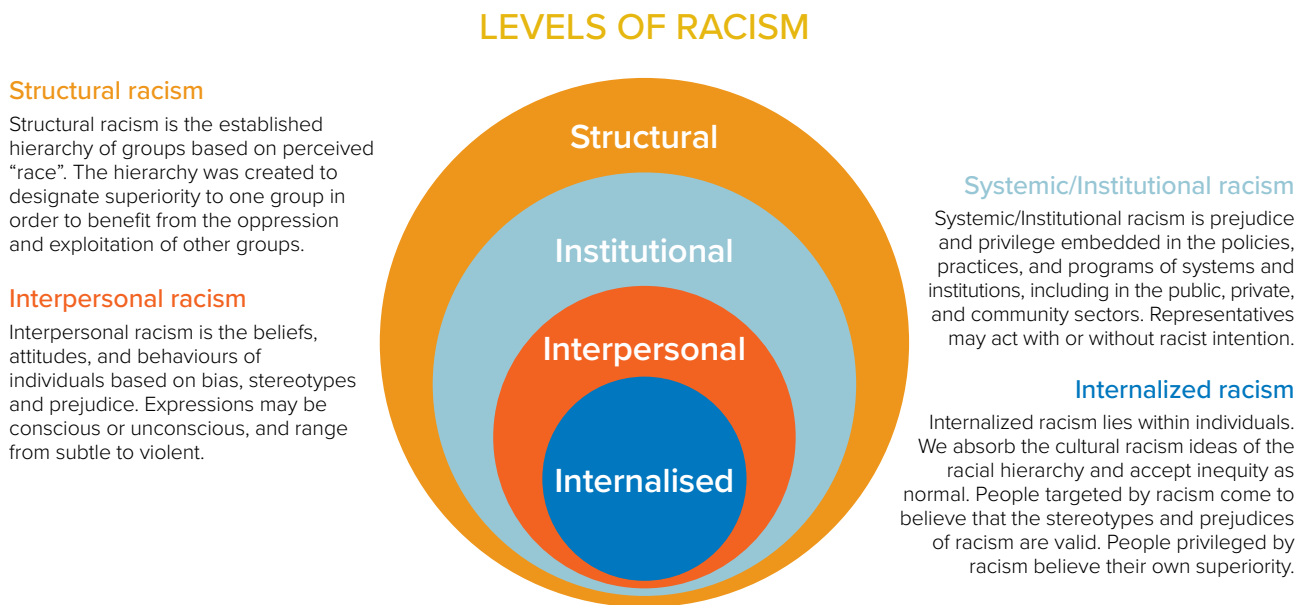
Racism is the inequitable distribution of benefits, resources, and opportunities among ethnic or racial groups. It manifests through deliberate or unintentional attitudes, actions, beliefs, norms, and practices ^[23].

Racism is a significant barrier to seeking support and accessing services, including NSP services, for Indigenous Australian peoples ^[10]. Structural racism is driven by systems, institutions, social forces, ideologies, and processes that interact with one another to reinforce inequity among racial and ethnic minorities ^[24].

At its core, racism is deeply intertwined with historical, social, cultural, and power imbalances within society, sustaining its existence through systemic injustices ^[23]. Racism continues to remain a part of the daily lives of Indigenous Australian peoples, having a debilitating impact on their cultural pride and identity, leading to an adverse impact on physical and mental health ^[25]. However, the pervasive reality of racism experienced by Indigenous Australian peoples often goes unnoticed by non-Indigenous Australians.

Four levels of racism are evident: structural racism, institutional racism, interpersonal racism, and internalised racism (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Levels of Racism



Source: Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan ^[26]

Anti-racism vs bystander

“No one is born racist or antiracist; these result from the choices we make” (p.3) ^[27].

Anti-racism seeks to actively challenge racism by striving to consciously change behaviours and beliefs that perpetuate racist actions. An anti-racist will action steps to eliminate racism whereas a bystander, although not participating in racism, will not take any action.

Anti-racism requires an individual to consistently practice self-awareness and self-reflection as systemic racism is deeply embedded around us and we sometimes may not be aware of our own unconscious biases.

“Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are; it is about what you do” (p.3) ^[27].

As an NSP worker, taking an anti-racist approach means actively ensuring harm reduction services are welcoming and accessible to Indigenous Australian peoples, advocating for culturally appropriate resources and addressing discriminatory attitudes or practices that might emerge in service delivery.

Watch Video: ‘The Invisible Discriminator’ Stop Think Respect (1:00 min)

Source: Beyond Blue Official ^[28]



For Indigenous Australian peoples who inject drugs, experiences of racism can create significant barriers to accessing NSP services, potentially increasing risks associated with equipment sharing. NSP staff must examine how service policies, physical environments, and staff attitudes might unintentionally perpetuate discrimination.

Activity

After watching the video, write about the experiences faced by Indigenous Aboriginal peoples impacted by bias.

Visit the [Racism. It Stops With Me](#) website and explore the '[Key terms](#)' that unpack some of the different ways that racism is expressed.

How does this relate or apply to the Indigenous Australian context and to your work in the context of NSPs?

Reflection

Research indicates that non-Indigenous Australian workers may unknowingly adopt attitudes that can negatively affect their practice. This makes it essential to critically reflect on the impact of colonisation and recognise how it shapes cultural identities and professional practices ^[29].

Reflect on how your own understanding of Australia's history and its ongoing impact on Indigenous Australian peoples and communities has influenced your approach to working with Indigenous Australian peoples.

Suggested Readings

- Herring, S., Spangaro, J., Lauw, M., & McNamara, L. (2013). The intersection of trauma, racism, and cultural competence in effective work with Aboriginal people: Waiting for trust. *Australian Social Work*, 66(1), 104–117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2012.697566>
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Module 2: Building Trust, Relationships and Partnerships: Exploring the Ongoing Journey to Developing Cultural Capability

Building trust, relationships, and partnerships is a continuous journey in developing cultural capability. Establishing meaningful connections with Indigenous Australian peoples requires genuine engagement, respect, and a commitment to listening and learning. Trust is built over time through consistent, culturally safe practices, and acknowledging past and present challenges faced by Indigenous Australian peoples.

For NSP workers, building trust and relationships is particularly crucial as Indigenous Australian peoples who inject drugs may have experienced discrimination in healthcare settings or hesitate to access harm reduction services due to stigma. Developing these relationships can increase Indigenous peoples' willingness to access sterile injecting equipment and harm reduction education.

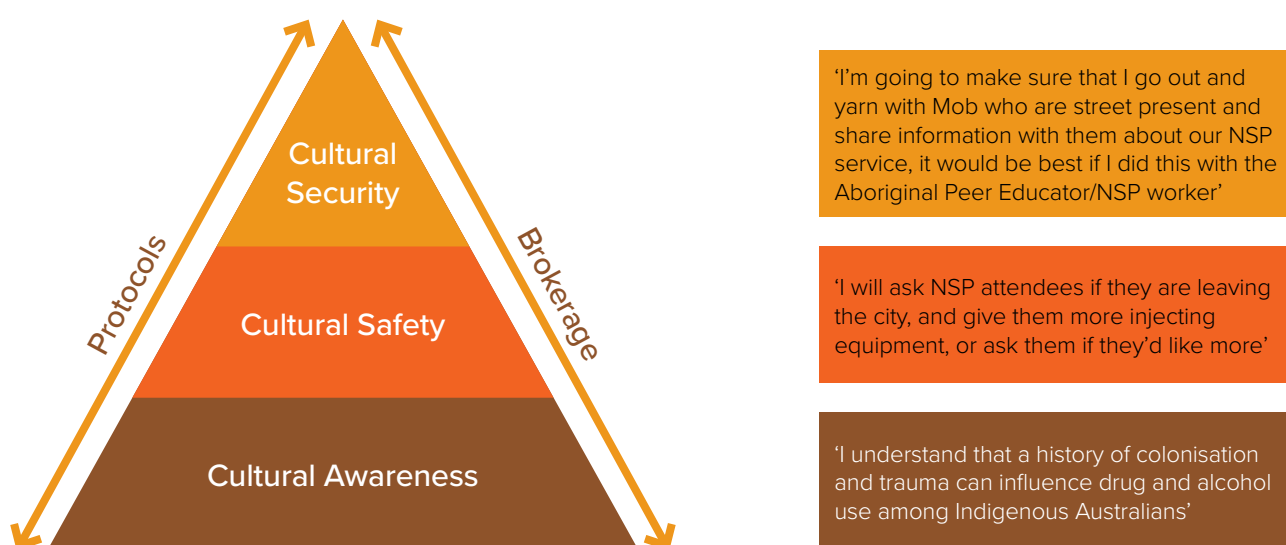
The objectives of module 2 are:

- Learn about Juli Coffin's Model of Cultural Security and how it can be applied to your work
- Understand the importance of building trust and meaningful relationships with local Indigenous Australian communities and services to enhance cultural safety
- Explore practical strategies for working in partnership with local Indigenous Australian services and communities.

Juli Coffin's Model of Cultural Security

Juli Coffin's Model of Cultural Security (Figure 8) outlines how cultural competency is on a continuum, and argues that awareness and safety mechanisms must be supported by brokerage and protocols to becoming culturally secure^[30].

Figure 8: Juli Coffin's Model of Cultural Security



Source: Adapted from Coffin^[31]

Brokerage facilitates a *two-way communication* where both parties are fully informed about the matter in discussion and considerations from both sides are given equal weight. Coffin ^[31] states that good brokerage is key to maintaining cultural security and it must be developed with the Aboriginal community by building trust. Respect and open communication are central to brokerage and listening and yarning are key.

Local Elders and Indigenous Australian staff are service providers' greatest assets and resources. Brokerage deepens our awareness into understanding successful and safe practice and creates networks between community members and service providers ^[31].

Within NSP services, brokerage might involve collaborating with Indigenous health workers who can facilitate communication between the service and Indigenous Australian peoples who might use the service, helping to address concerns about confidentiality, stigma, and service accessibility when obtaining injecting equipment.

Networks must be supported by **protocols**. These protocols validate that in an Indigenous Australian context, services and programs need to be developed and delivered with Elders and key stakeholders within that respective community ^[31]. Protocols are a strategy that can elevate a service from culturally safe to culturally secure by ensuring the involvement of local Elders and community members ^[31].

For NSPs, developing protocols with local Elders and community members might include determining culturally appropriate ways to provide harm reduction education, designing welcoming physical spaces, and establishing respectful intake procedures that acknowledge the historical context of injecting drug use in Indigenous communities.

The Importance of Partnerships When Working with Indigenous Australian Services and Communities

Developing partnerships with Indigenous Australian services, such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and the broader community is essential for delivering culturally appropriate and responsive services to Indigenous Australian peoples. These partnerships are grounded in trust, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to cultural capability. They play a crucial role in fostering inclusive environments, enhancing decision making, and ensuring that Indigenous voices are central in leadership and service strategies – particularly when addressing sensitive issues impacting Indigenous Australian communities. For NSP services, forming strong partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations creates vital referral pathways for Indigenous Australian peoples seeking additional support beyond harm reduction supplies. These partnerships can help address the holistic needs of Indigenous peoples who inject drugs, connecting them with culturally safe treatment options when desired.

Listen to a yarn with Dr Michelle Webb (13:59 mins):



“You can’t do good work with strangers.”

Michelle Webb is a Palawa woman from the south coast of Tasmania, who has been living and working within the Western Australian Noongar community across health and research for almost 30 years. Listen to Michelle's yarn about working with Indigenous Australian communities.

Michelle shares her insights on:

- The importance of localising your initiatives (1:26)
- Cultural load (1:45)
- Authenticity, how to engage (2:45)
- Sustainable relationships (3:45)
- Working in intercultural spaces (4:48)
- Listening (5:45)
- Knowing your limitations (6:15)
- Genuine partnerships (7:09)
- Investing in relationships (9:15)
- Making mistakes (9:35)
- Reciprocity (10:22)
- Building sustainable relationships (10:45)
- Shared decision making (12:45)

Michelle emphasises that “*collaboration is not the same as consultation*”. Slowing things down, *Debakarn*, may be necessary. Engaging with the NSP may not be the most important thing for Indigenous peoples because many experience a range of challenges and Elders bear a huge cultural load.

Investing in relationships with Elders and community members early on will reap great rewards. Through these relationships you will learn about cultural protocols and kinship systems and you can apply your knowledge of these to your NSP work. Indigenous peoples will want to come to your service. They will share with you both their own views and what their community thinks about an issue.

Strategies for Working in Partnership with Indigenous Australian Services and Communities

As has been highlighted, working in partnership with Indigenous Australian services and communities is essential for delivering culturally capable services. Genuine partnerships are built on respect, shared decision-making, and meaningful engagement that values Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. By collaborating with Indigenous communities, NSP workers can ensure their services are responsive, culturally capable, and support positive health outcomes. Strong partnerships foster trust, empowerment, and a deeper understanding of community needs.

NSP workers who understand the importance of these partnerships recognise that effective harm reduction for Indigenous Australian peoples who inject drugs goes beyond simply providing sterile equipment. It involves creating services that honour Indigenous Australian healing practices, respect cultural protocols around health discussions, and acknowledge the relationship between disconnection from culture and injecting drug use.

In this section, the *Third Space* and the *Wungening Cultural Framework* provide context to fostering partnerships with Indigenous Australian peoples and communities.

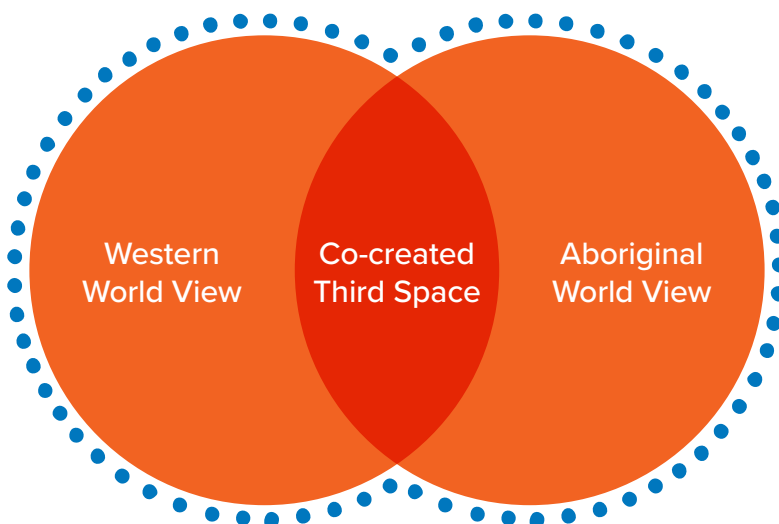
The Third Space

The *Third Space* (Figure 9) is a conceptual space where individuals from different cultural backgrounds engage in meaningful dialogue, fostering mutual understanding, and respect ^[32]. This space allows cultures to intersect and create hybrid contexts where power dynamics are equal, and both cultures are valued ^[32].

In this space, individuals can learn about one another's cultural worldviews, breaking down ethnocentric barriers and enhancing relationships. It plays a crucial role in health care, where shared cultural understanding can improve access to services, treatment acceptance, and overall health outcomes, particularly for Indigenous Australian communities ^[32].

In NSP settings, creating a third space might involve incorporating Indigenous Australian artwork in service areas, ensuring that harm reduction materials reflect Indigenous Australian perspectives, and training staff to understand how historical trauma influences Indigenous Australian peoples' experiences with injecting drug use and service engagement.

Figure 9: Co-created Third Space



Source: Adapted from Simone ^[33]

Activity

In your work, how do you/will you create a Third Space? Consider how your NSP service's physical environment, staff interactions, and educational materials could better reflect both 'Western' harm reduction approaches and Indigenous Australian perspectives on healing and wellbeing.

Wungening Cultural Framework

Wungening Aboriginal Corporation is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation which provides culturally secure and holistic programs, and strategies that inform, educate and address the harmful effects of alcohol, drugs, and other substances on individuals, families and communities and strengthen the mind and body, and heal the spirit.

The [Wungening Cultural Framework](#) ^[34] (Figure 10) acts as a guide for staff to:

- Recognise history and the impact of intergenerational trauma.
- Recognise that culture is central to wellbeing and identity.
- Recognise resilience and respect difference and cultural diversity.
- Reflect on our own cultural values, biases, beliefs and attitudes and how these impact on our behaviours.
- Be culturally safe in our service delivery.

Figure 10: Wungening Cultural Framework



Source: Wungening Aboriginal Corporation ^[34]

For NSP workers, applying this framework means recognising how historical trauma influences patterns of injecting drug use among Indigenous Australian peoples, ensuring that harm reduction services acknowledge culture as central to healing, and reflecting on how personal biases might affect service delivery when working with Indigenous peoples who inject drugs.

Listen to a Podcast by Bill Wilson: *Effective engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in mainstream services (24:51mins).*

Source: Emerging Minds ^[35]



Bill is an Indigenous SEWB worker who has worked in the alcohol and other drug field, child protection, child and adolescent mental health services, Aboriginal education, and Aboriginal men's health.

In this episode you will learn:

- What holistic engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families looks like (02:58)
- How to build rapport at the first engagement (04:13)
- How service flexibility can increase engagement (08:16)
- Therapeutic approaches that are effective with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (16:30).

Summary of Podcast

As a service provider, it is important to holistically engage with Indigenous Australian community members that visit your service. To do so, it is essential to understand that:

- Building a sustainable relationship takes time
- In Indigenous Australian cultures, relationships are reciprocal.

Service providers should slow things down and be conscious that the first engagement is critical for laying the foundation. The first engagement is about building rapport and trust, so they feel encouraged to walk through the door again and access the service.

Bill advises that he tries to create a connection by identifying where the person is from and who their Mob is. Bill says that people vote with their feet. If after their initial engagement, you can get them coming back the second and third time, you must be doing something right.

Services and programs that do get it right, where Indigenous Australian peoples come back and repeatedly use the service, notice that it is through peer referral. Peer referral is a good sign that something is being done right and that people using the service are talking to their family and friends about the service.

Past and ongoing policies and discrimination have led to a mistrust in the government and services for Indigenous Australian peoples. Therefore, service providers should understand that this process of building relationships requires time and effort.

Bill states that Indigenous Australian peoples' disconnection from culture, identity, and Country has led to issues of alcohol and drug use. Service providers should work with this in the forefront of their minds and never underestimate the importance of cultural identity to Indigenous Australian peoples.

Indigenous Australian peoples are deeply relational and spiritual, so a disconnect from cultural identity can profoundly disrupt the spirit. He urges service providers to be conscious of this while working with Indigenous Australian families and individuals.

Within NSP settings, these principles translate to creating welcoming environments where Indigenous Australian peoples who inject drugs feel respected when accessing injecting equipment, allowing adequate time for relationship building during brief interventions, and recognising that word-of-mouth referrals among Indigenous Australian community members indicate successful cultural safety practices.

We note that NSPs operate across diverse settings, and some of these learnings may not directly apply to your specific environment. We encourage you to adapt and contextualise this information in a way that best fits your service.

Reflection

After listening to the podcast, reflect on how your NSP service operations could be adapted to better incorporate relationship building approaches. Consider aspects like hours of operation, intake procedures, physical environment, and staff training that could better support cultural safety for Indigenous Australian peoples seeking harm reduction supplies and education.

Suggested Readings

Dudgeon, P. Wright, M., & Coffin, J. (2010). Talking it and walking it: Cultural competence. *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*, 13(3), 2944.

Gubhaju, L., Williams, R., Jones, J., Hamer, D., Shepherd, C., McAullay, D., Eades, S. J., & McNamara, B. (2020). "Cultural security is an on-going journey..." Exploring views from staff members on the quality and cultural security of services for Aboriginal families in Western Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(22), 8480. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17228480>

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Mental Health Coordinating Council. (2020). *Working collaboratively with Australia's First Nations people: A guide to providing culturally safe and sensitive practice in mental health community managed services*. <https://mhcc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Working-Collaboratively-with-Australia%E2%80%99s-First-Nations-People-Scoping-Review.pdf>

Module 3: Tools and Resources

In this section of the Toolkit, you will find a collection of tools and resources that promote self-reflection, self-assessment, and ongoing learning to support your journey towards cultural capability.

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is essential for personal and professional growth, assisting NSP workers to recognise biases, improve communication, and provide culturally safe services. Engaging in ongoing reflection enhances cultural capability and fosters more inclusive, respectful practices.

Now that you have explored the content in the Toolkit, we recommend using the following self-reflection tools:

- Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Self-Reflection Tool
- Privilege Walk
- Dadirri: Inner Deep Listening and Quiet Still Awareness.

Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Self-reflection Tool

Explore a structured self-reflection tool specifically tailored to enhance cultural responsiveness towards Indigenous Australian communities. This resource encourages individuals to critically examine their attitudes, beliefs, and practices.

Link: [Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Self-Reflection Tool](#) ^[36]

This tool consists of 35 questions on:

Personal identity

- Reflect on your own personal cultural identity.
- Increase your awareness of others' identities.
- Understand how your cultural identity and awareness may be reflected in the context in which you work and interact with others.

Indigenous Australian peoples' histories and living cultures

- Reflect on your current knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian peoples' histories and living cultures.
- Assess your confidence in applying this knowledge and understanding to your teaching practice.

Professional practice

- Reflect on your approaches to planning, implementing, and assessing teaching and learning.

Privilege Walk

The [Privilege Walk](#) activity ^[37] (Figure 11) is an interactive activity designed to help individuals recognise and reflect on the privileges they may hold. It highlights how privilege can shape opportunities, access, and power, often in ways we are unaware of.

This interactive activity consists of 30 questions. In most corporate settings, a score of 25 is average.

Figure 11: *Privilege Walk*



Source: *Evolve Communities* ^[37]

Reflection

After participating in the **Privilege Walk**, take time to reflect on your experience and how privilege plays a role in your life and interactions.

You can think about the following prompts for reflection:

- What privileges did you become more aware of that you might not have considered before?
- How might your privilege influence your relationships and interactions with Indigenous Australians?
- How can you use your privilege to challenge inequities and foster inclusion?
- What steps can you take to better support Indigenous colleagues, clients, or community members?

Dadirri: Inner Deep Listening and Quiet Still Awareness

In this activity, participants are invited to explore the concept of **Dadirri**—a practice of deep, inner listening and still awareness rooted in Indigenous culture. Inspired by the teachings of **Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr**, Dadirri encourages being present with nature, oneself, and others.

Instructions:

- Find a quiet space, ideally in nature, and practice stillness.
- Reflect on the sounds, feelings, and thoughts that arise.
- Consider how listening deeply can enhance your interactions with others, particularly in cross-cultural contexts.

Watch Video: *Dadirri by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr (3.42 mins)*

Source: *Miriam Rose Foundation* ^[38]



Reflection

Reflect on how stillness helps you connect with yourself and others. In what ways can deep listening enhance cultural understanding in your work?

Individual and Organisational Self-Assessment

A range of self-assessment tools are available to explore individual and organisational cultural capability. Explore one or more of the following self-assessment tools:

- Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment
- Partnership Self-Assessment Kit
- WANADA *The Standard* Interpretive guide and self-assessment tool

Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit

The Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit (CASAT) developed by the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS) helps individuals and organisations assess their level of cultural awareness and competence in working with Indigenous Australian peoples. It provides a structured framework to evaluate your knowledge, attitudes, and practices, identifying areas for growth.

It includes six good practice standards:

- Standard 1: Respect and Commitment
- Standard 2: Staff Knowledge and Development
- Standard 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment
- Standard 4: Culturally Appropriate Service Delivery
- Standard 5: Engagement with Communities
- Standard 6: Service Development and Evaluation

Within each standard, there are three parts for documenting:

1. Current evidence of good practice
2. Areas identified for improvement
3. Priority actions to improve against standard

Link: [Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment Toolkit](#) ^[39]

For more details, refer to page 1 and 2 of the resource.

Partnership self-assessment

[The Partnership Kit: Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships](#) ^[40] developed by Mission Australia provides guidelines and resources for creating effective partnerships with Indigenous Australian communities. It covers principles of respectful engagement, practical steps for collaboration, and case studies highlighting successful initiatives.

Alcohol and other Drug and Human Services Standard

WANADA (Western Australian Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies) lead a shared voice within the specialist alcohol and other drug service sector in Western Australia that drives and influences systemic change needed to achieve best community outcomes.

The Alcohol and other Drug and Human Services Standard (The Standard), see Figure 12, was developed by WANADA to:

- Assist organisations to understand and apply the standard to their organisation/service.
- Provide a framework to guide self-assessment.
- Support and guide continuous quality improvement.

Figure 12: *The Standard*



Source: WANADA ^[41]

An Interpretive Guide and Self-Assessment Tool is available to assist organisations to enhance their ways of culturally responsive and evidence informed work with various cultures and across diverse settings ^[41].

Important Dates

There are many significant days and dates throughout the year that hold meaning for Indigenous Australian peoples. These occasions serve to acknowledge, celebrate, and remember both contemporary and historical events, people, places, times, and seasons. Below is a selection of key dates that offer opportunities to demonstrate cultural awareness and respect for the history and traditions of Indigenous Australian peoples. This list is not exhaustive.

26 January	Day of Mourning often known as Australia Day, is dedicated to reflecting on the effects of colonisation on Indigenous Australian peoples and acknowledging their continued resilience and survival.
13 February	National Apology Day commemorates the anniversary of the Australian Parliament's formal apology to Indigenous Australian peoples, particularly the Stolen Generations, for historical injustices.
20 March	National Close the Gap Day is dedicated to raising awareness about the life expectancy disparity between Indigenous Australian peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, advocating for equality in health outcomes and life expectancy.
21 March	IDERD (International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) serves as a reminder of the need to challenge racism, discrimination, and injustice in all forms. It is a call to act on building more inclusive and equitable societies.
26 May	National Sorry Day often referred to as the National Day of Healing, honours the Stolen Generations and is part of the ongoing initiatives aimed at achieving reconciliation between Indigenous Australian peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.
27 May – 3 June	National Reconciliation Week is dedicated to commemorating the anniversary of the 1967 referendum and the High Court's Mabo Decision.
3 June	Mabo Day honours the significant High Court decision in 1992 that acknowledges Native Title, as well as Eddie Mabo's role in advancing Indigenous Australian peoples' land rights.
First week of July	NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee) Week is dedicated to celebrating the history, culture, and accomplishments of Indigenous Australian peoples.
9 August	International Day of World's Indigenous People focus is on raising awareness and protecting the rights of Indigenous populations around the world.
10 December	International Human Rights Day advocates for and celebrates human rights, including those of Indigenous Australian peoples.

Activity

How can you and/or your organisation acknowledge these key dates?

Reflection

Below are some questions to reflect on when building cultural capability. Some questions are for individuals and teams, others are more relevant for organisational leaders.

- What strategies have you put in place to build cultural competency and cultural safety for your staff and the Indigenous Australian peoples working within your area/organisation?
- Has your service/team completed any cultural awareness/cultural competency training?
- Does your service/team celebrate significant Indigenous Australian cultural events?
- Do you identify and challenge inappropriate behaviours in others and create a safe space for Indigenous Australian staff to report such behaviours if required?
- Do you understand what is expected of you in responding to racism, discrimination, and cultural abuse?

Ongoing Learning

This Toolkit was primarily designed for NSP service providers in metropolitan Boorloo (Perth), WA. A range of training is available across Perth to develop cultural capability, some examples are provided below. Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

Learners located outside of Boorloo, WA, or in other states and territories are encouraged to identify relevant cultural capability training available to them locally.

Training available in Boorloo

Please note, these trainings were available at the time of publication of the Toolkit and may be subject to change.

- Ways of Working with Aboriginal People Training by Mental Health Commission: <https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/training-and-events/strong-spirit-strong-mind-aboriginal-programs/ways-of-working-with-aboriginal-people/>
- Moodjar's Cultural Competency Training (CCT) – Moodjar can tailor CCT program that is suitable for you and your organisation - <https://moodjar.com.au/services/cultural-competency-training>
- Evolve WA Aboriginal Cultural Competence: Moving Beyond Awareness Course - <https://evolvewa.com.au/courses/aboriginal-cultural-competence/>
- Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation Cultural Awareness Training - <https://www.moorditjkoort.com.au/services/cultural-awareness-training.aspx>
- Curtin University: Cultural Immersion Education and Training - <https://www.curtin.edu.au/study/professional-development/cultural-training/>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Training (online Module) WA Government - <https://www.wa.gov.au/service/human-resource-management/training-and-development/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-cultural-awareness-training>

Your feedback is important

Thank you for completing the Educultural Toolkit. We hope it has supported meaningful reflection on biases and practices.

To evaluate the impact of the Toolkit and enhance future versions, we invite you to provide feedback through a [short post-evaluation form](#) (approximately 5–10 minutes). Your insights are invaluable in ensuring the Toolkit remains effective and relevant.

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About the Artwork

The *Healthy Blood Healthy Body* project worked with local artist, Mavis Lyndon, to develop a visual story of our collective work, *Finding the resources* (2022).



Mavis shares the story of this artwork:

“This artwork tells a story of Indigenous people that desire help from each group which is in the centre of this painting.

The multiple curved U shapes in the centre of the artwork are desired people that are wanting help. The desired people can be on many levels of life, which explains the dark and light blue colours (water).

This connects with the orange pathway and kangaroo tracks; every desired people can get the help from each of the four groups. Each pathway will give you the different help and connections to different resources on which that desired person needs.

Each brown circle (land) is surrounded by curved U shapes that are Curtin University, the Aboriginal Advisory Group, Chief Investigators, and Health Services that are willing to help these desired people.

And surrounded by all four lands and desired people are the families that are there for the support and the family member. Family is yellow (sand), which is safe place.”

About the Artist

Mavis Lyndon is a young female artist who identifies as Wongi, Yamatji, and Torres Strait Islander. Mavis has been painting for five years and has found her passion in creating pieces symbolic of connection and non-judgment, encouraging Aboriginal people to work through feelings of shame and seek support to be able to reconnect with others.



Curtin University

Contact

Dr Roanna Lobo

Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact in Public Health (CERIPH)

School of Population Health, Curtin University

Email: roanna.lobo@curtin.edu.au

ceriph.curtin.edu.au